

placing the specimen into a container excluding the addition of any degradation-inhibiting agents, wherein the face coming into contact with the specimen is made of or coated with a material, wherein said material inhibits the activation of a substance, which substance if not activated, cannot degrade the mammalian natriuretic peptides and is selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics.

6. (Three Times Amended) A method for measuring mammalian natriuretic peptides in a specimen, comprising the steps of:

employing a container excluding the addition of any degradation-inhibiting agents, upon handling the specimen, comprising a material, wherein said material inhibits the activation of a substance, which substance if not activated, cannot degrade the mammalian natriuretic peptides and is selected from the group consisting of silicone and plastics; and

measuring the mammalian natriuretic peptides by standard means.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version showing the changes made to the application by this Amendment.